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CARSWELL, Grace. – *Cultivating Success in Uganda. Kigenzi Farmers & Colonial Policy*. Nairobi-Oxford, The British Institute in Eastern Africa and James Currey, 2007, 258 p.

1 Grace Carswell has produced a comprehensive historical study of the implementation and evolution of colonial agricultural policy in Eastern Africa. Taking the Ugandan region of Kigezi as a case study, the book utilizes deep archival research to develop a complex picture of colonial efforts to tackle agriculture issues ranging from land tenure to swamp reclamation. A theme followed throughout is the conflict between local and imperial knowledge. Relatedly, Carswell's most significant innovation comes in querying the constructed nature of "success" and "failure" *vis-à-vis* colonial agricultural policy and local perspectives. "This study of Kigezi in the twentieth century", she suggests, "sheds light on the way that 'success" and "failure' have been evaluated in the colonial period, something that continues to be relevant for contemporary development policy" (p. 9).

2 Kigezi is situated in southwest Uganda, on the country's borders with Rwanda and Congo. Carswell has selected Kigezi as case first because in addition to being a space of numerous more minor colonial agricultural interventions, the region also experienced interventions in two central agricultural arenas: cash-cropping and land tenure. As Carswell details, cash-cropping and land tenure policies were implemented in other Eastern African colonies, notably Kenya, but what has distinguished Kigezi is its an unrealistic reputation as "overpopulated" and "threatened with serious environmental degradation" which it acquired during the era of colonial development and which it "has never been able to shake-off" (p. 59). This reputation, Carswell suggests, was very much the product of colonial constructions of "success" and "failure" and is significant because these "myths shaped action" and have "only recently been put to the test" (p. 59).

3 In focusing on Kigezi, Carswell also departs from the theoretical orientation of earlier literature on agricultural policy in Eastern Africa. Such literature has tended to focus on major colonial interventions–destocking in Ukambani and terracing in Kikuyuland both come to mind–and the proto-nationalist resistance that these policies engendered. Carswell, in contrast, aims for part for a micro-analysis of colonial methods for policy implementation in order to reveal the oft-neglected "mundane and pragmatic reasons for the 'failure' of such schemes" (p. 49).

4 While focusing a tight lens on Kigezi, Carswell also does an excellent job of situating interventions in Kigezi–and their perceived "success" and "failure"–within broader imperial networks of knowledge about agricultural development. These discussions of policy across the British Empire and beyond underscore the solid archival research that underpins the book. Carswell is particularly adept at tracing the "conversations" occurring in colonial documents and the circulation of technical knowledge. For example, she interrogates the annual conferences held for Directors of Agriculture from East Africa to "share information between the colonies" and how East African officials traveled as far afield as South Africa, India and the United States to gather information on agricultural development policy (p. 56). Overall, she ably uses governmental *rapportage* to trace broad agro-environmental epistemologies.

5 The book is a historian's history and as such Carswell primarily uses her ethnographic data straightforwardly to fill in contextual or narrative silences in the archival record. For example, writing on "chiefly authority" in regard to colonial "Agricultural Rules", she explains, "No court records survive of the punishments for failing to carry out measures, but oral evidence suggests that fines and short terms of imprisonment were the most common punishments..." (p. 64). Further, the book does a good job of analyzing linguistic evidence to cross check archival claims. For example, in examining evidence indicating that an unusually high number of Kigezi households had seemingly acquired land through "blood brother relations", Carswell points out that a range of local terms, and therefore a range of local relationships, were rendered in English as "blood brother", thus calling the archival claims about acquisition into question (p. 98).

6 Ethnographic data is also contained in text boxes interspersed throughout the latter chapters of the book. When these text boxes contain ethnographic vignettes of people affected by colonial interventions, they are highly effective. For example, the vignette of Milka, a woman adversely affected by shifting land tenure policies, serves not only to elucidate these policies more fully, but also to imbue them with a human element (p. 93). When the text boxes contain non-narrative information, for example on swampland, they read as excess information, perhaps excised from earlier drafts (p. 105).

7 While Carswell's prose is clear and at times even elegant, the book reads as an unreconstructed dissertation. At points this organization is helpful to the reader. For example, the chapters include tidy introductions and neat conclusions. In other instances, it is detrimental to the book's overall narrative. Carswell broaches so many small arguments about individual agricultural policies that the reader must work to keep the book's overarching argument in mind.

8 All in all, Carswell offers an insightful, well-supported, engaging treatment of the development of colonial agricultural policy in Eastern Africa. The book's attention to networks of knowledge renders it useful historians of Africa and to historians concerned with environmental history more generally. The book's thematic focus on the

constructed nature “success” and “failure” and on the related implications for policy-making and implementation make the book useful to scholars of colonial and present-day development praxis.